

adoptionuk

for every adoptive family



Northern Ireland e-Newsletter September 2018

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Message from EJ Havlin, Director in Northern Ireland



Welcome to our latest local newsletter, highlighting what members have been participating in and what is planned for the months ahead. In this issue, we have an exciting support group programme, with some additional events planned to celebrate 'National Adoption Week' next month, starting with a 'Family Day' planned for Saturday 13th October, which will enable adoptive families to enjoy a day out together in W5.

In this edition, we are asking for participation in a local survey which we're compiling on the experiences of Concurrent Carers. We are keen to hear the voices of those of you who are, or have been a concurrent carer. On a national platform, the latest Adoption UK campaign focus is on the need to give adopted children an equal chance in education and was launched in the Houses of Parliament, back at the end of June. The link between social and emotional wellbeing and educational attainment is well documented but the survey undertaken with members back in Spring, revealed the realities for adoptive families and their children. The results of the survey have been collated into a report 'Bridging the Gap' and highlights areas of action needed, including: increasing understanding of the impact of trauma on attainment, steps to empower parents, plus demands that government start collecting data on adopted children in schools.

www.adoptionuk.org.

Adoption UK annual UK conference will take place in Birmingham on 10th November – 'Life Story: Making sense of the past.' www.adoptionuk.org. This is open to all members to attend. In addition, a new set of member benefits have been launched to offer wider discounts and services to the adoption community. Hopefully you have received details to the Adoption UK Advantage directly.

A number of local members attended the 'Young Hearts & Minds' conference in Belfast back in June. It brought together a host of experts, including Dr Dan Siegel, to explore some of the critical factors involved in child and adult mental health. Stuart Brown, who is an adopter and currently completing his social work training at QUB, attended and has provided his thoughts on the event.

Finally, for anyone involved in applications to higher education (colleges or university), a reminder of the 'Tick the Box' campaign which encourages care-experienced students to identify themselves so they can get access to additional support - practical & academic. Information below. Please get in touch if you have any queries, have any suggestions or need some information, and we're always looking for people who will volunteer for media. [Click here](#) to email EJ

Thank you, EJ

Adoption UK events update



Thank you to everyone who joined us at our family fun event at Lough Neagh Discovery Centre. It was a beautiful sunny day and families enjoyed pond dipping, archery, selfies with a snake and much more.



A big thank you to our LGBT support group who took part in Belfast Pride. Further group events below.



“Up for a whacky adventure with a llama?”

Come and join our group of secondary schoolers and their parents – we meet four times a year for a range of fun activities.

Last time it was Jungle NI; this time round we are getting down to a bit of drumming – bring your ear defenders! For more information

E: elizabethlyttle@adoptionuk.org.uk

National Adoption Week in October - Local Events



Saturday 13th October - Family Event. Join us for a Family day at the amazing W5-WhoWhatWhereWhenWhy, the SSE Arena in Belfast from 10.30-2.30pm

W5 provides a unique experience, is fantastic fun and has interactive exhibits for all the family to enjoy. Entrance is free to Adoption UK members - please [click here](#) to reserve your place or phone Tracey 9077 5211.

Sunday 14th October - Adoption Information Event at Adoption UK, 63-75 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast from 2-4pm. This is an opportunity for anyone who is considering adoption or at the very early stages of their adoption journey to come along and listen to adoptive parents share their experiences. Please email [Tracey](#) if you are planning to attend or T: 9077 5211, for more details.

Monday 15th October - Official launch by the local Health Trusts at Oxford Island

Tuesday 16th October - Legal Seminar - Interagency Childcare & Legal Issues Groups in Bar Library Coleraine Support Group - Rhythmic Movement session. Details below. T: 9077 5211

Thursday 18th October - Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Aware NI host an evening with Dr Raja Mukherjee, acclaimed Development Psychiatrist and expert in FASD. Details www.fasdawareni.org

Throughout the week Libraries NI will be promoting children's reading books with links to adoption.

Support Group News



There are geographically based support groups across NI run by volunteers who are experienced adopters. In addition, there are thematic groups for dads, LGBT parents, concurrent carers and single adopters. There is also peer support groups for parents facing extremely challenging circumstances and who meet monthly.

Our programme includes a range of topics that include skilling up your network, post adoption depression, speech, language and child development and much more.

The Coleraine Support Group invitation to event '**Rhythmic Movement**' session, which is a Swedish therapy which helps integrate primitive reflexes using exercises with gentle, innate infant movements. Practitioners of Rhythmic Movement, see key reflexes at the root of our children's ability to thrive at school and then stimulate change, through play, simple exercise and massage. The Coleraine Support Group are hosting Gaynor Ralls who is a Neuro-developmental consultant, a qualified teacher with 20 years experience and an instructor in Rhythmic Movement Training. She personally experienced how effective it was for her dyspaxic son. She is delivering some '**School Readiness**' training in the local area and when approached, was delighted to come to the group meeting. The Coleraine Support Group are encouraging other members to attend this session and take advantage of this opportunity.

Event detail: 16th Oct 7.30-9.30pm Sandel Centre, Coleraine

Details of the Local Support Group full programme [click here](#).

Calling all Concurrent Carers



Through our local Adoption UK helpline and informal discussions in local support groups, we have become increasingly aware of challenges that some carers involved in Concurrent Care placements are experiencing. As Concurrent Care increases throughout all five trust areas in Northern Ireland we feel it is timely to give our members who are or have been involved in this process an opportunity to voice their experiences. We hope to collate examples of practice across the five trusts and share this with the Health and Social Care Board.

Our aim is to acknowledge good practice and also to improve it in the area of Concurrent Care for everyone. The survey can be carried out **anonymously**, although we are keen to profile case studies and if you would be prepared to be contacted in order to discuss issues further or perhaps be involved in a focus group, there is an opportunity at the start of the survey to share your name and contact details (**only with Adoption UK**). This would be exclusively for our use and no individual experiences or names will be shared with any other bodies.

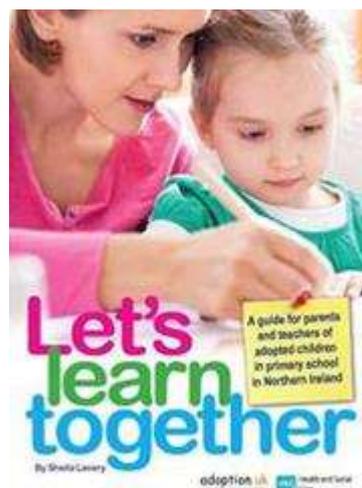
We are keen for anyone who has been involved in concurrent care in the past or present in Northern Ireland to complete the survey. If you were involved in Family Care's former 'Unite' project we would appreciate your insight, as it would enable us to compare and contrast past practice with current operations. We appreciate in advance your time in sharing your experiences, in the hope of improving current practice across Northern Ireland. In order to get as full a picture as possible we would appreciate, where possible, that you use the spaces provided throughout to expand on answers.

[Click here](#) for survey - Closing Date 31 October 2018

Let's Learn Together regional workshops

We are delighted to once again be able to offer parents across each of the five Trust areas the opportunity to bring their child's teacher or classroom assistant or any learning support, to an open 'Let's Learn Together' evening information session.

The sessions are being delivered jointly with the Fostering Network, and aim to help schools understand the impact of developmental trauma on children's capacity to learn and to develop strategies that support the child's development. [Click here](#) for information



Upcoming Events

Adopters Considering a Sibling Group. Saturday 10th November 2018 - Belfast

Thinking about adopting siblings? Wondering about extending your current approval to more than one child? This one-day workshop which is being led by experienced adopters, will consider the benefits for brothers and sisters sharing an adoptive family and the potential challenges for both adopters and children of siblings being placed together.

This training has been generously funded by the Regional Adoption and Fostering Service and is free-of-charge for adoptive families. For further information and to book a place please [click here](#)

Also:

Adoption UK Annual Conference - Saturday 10th November, Birmingham

Theme of conference: 'Life Story: Making sense of the past'. Details www.adoptionuk.org.uk

Adopter Voice - Young Hearts & Minds Conference by Stuart

On the 27th and 28th June 2018 I had the opportunity to attend the Young Hearts and Minds Conference in Belfast, thanks to the support of Adoption UK (Northern Ireland).

This was an excellent opportunity to hear from some of the world's key thinkers and practitioners working in the field of childhood trauma. I was particularly impacted and challenged by Dr Dan Siegel, and the 'yes brain' approach when working with traumatised children and adolescents. Dr Siegel went on in a workshop to highlight the potentially devastating impact of cross generational trauma, this was particularly salient when considering the Northern Ireland context and the impact of the troubles.

Additionally, Dr Gabor Mate spoke with great authority and expertise about the limitations of the medical model in the diagnosing of ADD and ADHD and how potential linkages to attachment theory are not given thorough consideration in this process. Dr Mate in a further workshop spoke about addiction and how society views the issue, compelling the audience to consider our own personal and professional approach to both understanding what addiction is, its potential roots in childhood trauma and how we should respond to truly support those who struggle with addiction. Dr Mate suggested a simple summary of working in this field as 'the goal of addiction work is to heal the trauma'.

Numerous other speakers presented during the two days of this conference and I am still processing the messages I heard. It was a great opportunity to stretch my mind and consider both my personal and professional methodology to managing the impacts of trauma. Stuart

ARIS Exchange Day



ARIS Exchange Day

The Adoption Regional Information System (ARIS) is hosting their next Adoption Exchange Day on **2nd October 2018**. Adoption UK will be in attendance and available for a coffee and a chat.

Exchange Days allow prospective adopters who are waiting to be placed to consider the profiles of children who are similarly waiting for a family. Photographs, personal possessions, art work, DVD

footage and other contributions, both from the children themselves and those who know them well, are featured alongside a detailed profile helping families to get a sense of each child's personality, interests and needs. The children's social workers, and often their foster carers, are available to answer questions and talk about what the children are like to live with and care for on a daily basis.

Exchange Days are vitally important in family finding and give adopters the opportunity to be much more actively involved in the matching process. If you are a prospective adopter awaiting placement, please read [this leaflet](#) for the next event and speak to your social worker about going along.

Encouraging children to read

The BookTrust encourage children to read in lots of different ways and highlight that starting early is key and involving all the family is the best way.

They have produced a 'Great Books Guide' full of great books all chosen carefully to appeal to children of different ages, reading levels and interest which is grouped by age. [Click here](#) for guide



Here's a reading recommendation from local member Stephen

Roald Dahl is one of the greatest storytellers in the world. He has managed to write really rich and entertaining children's stories that grown-ups can enjoy too. We bought our son a box set of his books one Christmas and have made our way through each title, without getting bored or giving up on a book.

There are a few titles my son really enjoyed; *The Giraffe and the Pelly and me*, *The Twits* and *Danny the Champion of the World*. I love to watch the expression on his face change from a smile, to surprise, to screwed up eyes as he follows the twists and turns in the story.

The quirky world and characters Dahl creates really help to fire my son's imagination and lets him play out scenarios in fantasy that wouldn't be appropriate in real life! Like the 'would you rather' game – "Would you rather drink a glass of water with an eyeball in it or be superglued to the ceiling?" Reading together helps to build the bond further, set a bedtime routine and learn something at the same time. We'd recommend any of

Roald Dahl's children's stories.

If you would like to recommend any books or share comments/reviews on the benefits of reading with your child/ren then we would love to hear from you. Please contact [Tracey](#) or call 9077 5211

Please return your library books



In order to meet members library requests we would be grateful if you could please return any overdue books which you have borrowed from us.

Please return to our Belfast office by either post or you are very welcome to drop in the office but please phone first.T: 9077 5211

Other news...



'Tick the Box' Is your child considering Higher Education?

Higher Education can be a huge challenge and we would encourage young adopted people to **'tick the box'** on their UCAS form saying they are care experienced, and get the extra support they are entitled to and may need while at college/university.

The support on offer will vary and can range from additional finances in the form of a bursary to practical support. It does not affect offers of university places. To read more [click here](#)

Contact us

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Website: www.adoptionuk.org